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A PARTIAL HISTORY OF
THE NEW ENGLAND BOTANICAL CLUB

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The four hundred and seventy-third meeting of the New England Botanical Club, being the seven hundredth since the original establishment, was held at the Harvard Faculty Club, Cambridge, Massachusetts on April 6, 1973, as a dinner meeting. One hundred six members and guests were present. Dr. Wesley Tiffany presided. Dr. Gordon DeWolf, program chairman, arranged the evening celebration. At the head table were the senior members of the Club who were able to be present: Ralph Bean (elected 1909), G. Safford Torrey (elected 1912), Donald White (elected 1913), Henry Svenson (elected 1919), W. H. "Cap" Weston (elected 1921), Ralph Wetmore (elected 1927), and Hugh Raup (elected 1929), the officers, the speaker and their wives. A printed menu was available, as was a souvenir program, prepared by Dr. DeWolf, which contained a reprint of an address by Emile F. Williams on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Club, a summary of meeting places, and a roster of the officers and committee chairmen who have served the New England Botanical Club during the years. I was asked to "reminisce" as the presentation of the evening. Although I am not the oldest member of the Club by a good many years, I did have a few kodachrome slides of earlier years, and I supple-

mented these with some investigations into the history of the Club. Regrettably, the first four volumes of the minutes of meetings of the Club have been "misplaced" for many years. They have since been found, so the following material is not exactly what was said in the course of the evening but amplified in part.

In 1894 Mr. Warren H. Manning, a landscape architect in Boston, called a meeting at the old Horticultural Hall in Boston of the local botanists in order to ask their cooperation in assembling an herbarium of the plants of the Boston Metropolitan Parks. This may have planted the idea of a club of New England botanists. Manning noted that almost all assembled had to be introduced to each other. His task was to prepare a list of the plants growing in the local parks. Such a flora was published eventually by Walter Deane.

On December 4, 1895, Professor W. G. Farlow and Dr. B. L. Robinson invited seventeen gentlemen to meet on December 10 to consider the advisability of forming a botanical club. One of the invitations preserved in the Club archives specifies: "My house is 24 Quincy Street, next door to the Colonial Club. The cars stop at Quincy Square (Beck Hall)." On the site of Farlow's house now stands the Carpenter Center. The Colonial Club was replaced by the Harvard Faculty Club. Beck Hall was on the location of the Gulf Station on Massachusetts Avenue, and the name Quincy Square is no longer used. Thus, the seven hundredth meeting was held next door to the original gathering place where these men formed the New England Botanical Club. A second meeting within a month reaffirmed the decision to form a botanical club, and the NEBC was officially christened on February 5, 1896, at a third meeting. The charter members were seventeen in number. At the fourth meeting in March, 1896, Messrs. Fernald, Fuller, Greenman, J. R. Jack, Manning, John Robinson, and Rich from Boston were elected members, and the first non-resident members, Sears and Bailey of Providence and Jackson of Worcester, were elected.

The early meetings were held in members' homes, Farlow, Sargent, and Goodale being cited as excellent hosts. Later in 1896 the Club met at Young's Hotel on Court Street; from November 6, 1896 to December 4, 1903 at the St. Botolph Club on Newbury Street; from 1904-1906 at the Hotel Brunswick on Boylston Street; from 1907-1923 at the Twentieth Century Club on Joy Street, and from 1924-1954 at the American Academy on Newbury Street, all in Boston. Since 1954 the NEBC has met at the Harvard University Herbaria in Cambridge.

The Founders

The charter members of the NEBC were seven professional botanists and ten amateurs. Although biographical sketches of some are published in *Rhodora*, not all charter members are so recorded. Their contributions to the NEBC, to botany of New England, and to botany at Harvard are so great that a brief review of these founders seems to be in order. They lived to an average age of seventy-seven years, supporting the oft-quoted statistic on the longevity of botanists.

Joseph Richmond Churchill — 1845-1933

(*Rhodora* 36: 1-7. 1934.)

A member of the class of 1867 at Harvard, Churchill studied botany under Asa Gray, but he specialized in law (Class of 1869) and was appointed a judge after only two years of private practice in 1871. He started collecting plants with his fiancée, Mary Cushing, and they jointly prepared five hundred numbers before their wedding. Churchill's personal herbarium of 13,313 specimens was left to the Missouri Botanical Garden through the influence of Jesse M. Greenman. However, Churchill had exchanged duplicates with Walter Deane, whose herbarium is in the NEBC. Churchill wrote a *Flora of Milton* (1887). His will contained a bequest of \$1,000 for *Rhodora*.

Frank Shipley Collins — 1849-1920

(*Rhodora* 22: 96. 1920., *Amer. Jour. Bot.* 12: 54-62. 1926.)

An algologist with many articles on the subject to his credit, Collins was on the editorial staff of *Rhodora* for twenty-one years. Although an obituary was promised for *Rhodora*, only the death notice cited above ever appeared.

George Edward Davenport — 1833-1907

(*Rhodora* 10: 1-9. 1908.)

Best known for his contributions to the study of ferns in nearly one hundred articles, Davenport also specialized on the general flora of Middlesex Fells and wrote a *Flora of Medford* (1875-1876). His collection of fern specimens was given to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1875, and shortly after that he began a new personal herbarium. This his daughter gave to the Gray Herbarium after his death. Subsequently the earlier collections were given by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society to the Gray Herbarium.

Lorin Low Dame — 1838-1903

(*Rhodora* 5: 121:123. 1903.)

A principal of Lexington High School and subsequently of Medford High School for a total of twenty-seven years, Dame collected in the Lexington area and on Nantucket. He is best remembered for his books, "Typical Elms and Other Trees of Massachusetts" (1890) and the "Handbook of the Trees of New England" (1902).

Walter Deane — 1848-1933

(*Rhodora* 35: 69-80. 1933.)

Deane was a graduate of Harvard, class of 1870, and taught in the private schools of St. Mark's and Hopkinson for twenty-five years. He became interested in botany in 1880 and worked hard on the flora of the Boston Park System for the M.D.C., for which he compiled an herbarium which became the first large accession of the NEBC. He

also helped curate the ornithological collection of William Brewster and helped issue the "Birds of the Cambridge Region" (1906). His first herbarium specimen was identified by Asa Gray as *Gerardia purpurea* and is in the Club herbarium. Deane collected with Kennedy and Churchill and was a long time friend of L. H. Bailey. He bought and exchanged specimens and built up a personal herbarium of 40,000 sheets. The early lists of distributions of New England plants were often based on his meticulous records. Walter Deane also gathered New England specimens which were to serve as the models for the Blaschka glass flowers being assembled by Goodale.

Deane served on the first Visiting Committee of the Gray Herbarium and helped Robinson plan the building constructed in the Botanic Garden in 1915, donating his personal library to the Gray Herbarium in 1918. He assembled an extensive collection of portraits of botanists. On his seventy-fifth birthday (1923) the members of the NEBC, as a surprise to him, collected \$1,000 which was presented to the Club as a library fund in Deane's honor. His will contained bequests to the Club and to the Gray Herbarium.

William Gilson Farlow — 1844-1919

(*Rhodora* 22: 1-8. 1920.)

Although Asa Gray had been asked much earlier to organize a club of amateurs and professionals for the study of the New England flora, he did not feel it was worthwhile. It was Professor William G. Farlow who called the first meeting at his home, the start of the NEBC.

Farlow studied with Gray, graduated from Harvard College in 1866, and obtained an M.D. degree in 1870. For two years he worked at the Gray Herbarium, but in 1874 he joined the staff of the Bussey Institution. He wished to specialize on algae and his report of 1879 on algae in Massachusetts water supplies is regarded as a classic. In 1879 Farlow announced his intentions of leaving his library and herbarium to Harvard. In his will, probated after

his death in 1919, Farlow had stipulated that his collections were to be removed from the flammable Agassiz Museum and properly housed within three years or the collections would be given to Yale. Three months before the time limit expired, the University chose the Divinity School Library building as the location. That building and the collections have since been known as the Farlow Herbarium and Library. Until her death some years later, Mrs. Farlow financed the operation of this collection.

Charles Edward Faxon — 1846-1918

(*Rhodora* 20: 117-122. 1918.)

Faxon was one of a family of linguists but is best known as an artist. He taught himself to draw and was making saleable copies of Audubon's work at the age of 15. Although he was trained as a civil engineer at the Lawrence Scientific School, he took a position as instructor in botany at the Bussey Institution in 1879. There D. C. Eaton asked him to prepare drawings of ferns. By 1882 his work had come to the attention of Charles Sargent who lured him to the Arnold Arboretum where he prepared seven hundred and forty-four plates for the *Silva of North America*. Between 1879 and 1913 Faxon published 1,925 plates of his botanical art, an average of fifty-seven illustrations a year for thirty-four years. Faxon also translated botanical work for Sargent from Portuguese, Italian and Danish, several of which are published. His personal writings were few, a paper on birds in the Arnold Arboretum and a note on *Aster*.

Edwin Faxon — 1823-1898

(*Rhodora* 2: 107-111. 1900.)

This Jamaica Plain bachelor was a leather merchant who retired at the age of fifty-eight and devoted much of his time to collecting plants. His early botanical forays were with C. Pringle in Vermont, and he devoted time to the area of Lake Champlain, Mount Washington and Mount Desert Island. In 1890 Faxon translated from the German

an important monograph of *Sphagnum* through a contact with D. C. Eaton. He continued this interest, assembling and distributing large exsiccatae of mosses. It is reported that Faxon was one of the most knowledgeable individuals of his time on the entire flora of New England.

George Lincoln Goodale — 1839-1923

(*Rhodora* 25: 117-120. 1923.)

A graduate of Bowdoin College, Goodale received an M.D. degree from Harvard in 1863. He taught at Bowdoin, practiced medicine, farmed, wrote on animal breeding, and formed a company to make condensed milk. In 1868 he published a catalogue of the plants around Portland, Maine, and in 1872 joined the Harvard faculty upon Asa Gray's retirement to teach classes in botany. During this period he also wrote the physiological section of Gray's Botanical Textbook. In 1879 Goodale was appointed director of the Botanic Garden of Harvard, succeeding Sargent in that role, and Curator of the Botanical Museum. His text of "Wild Flowers of America" (1882) was supported by Isaac Sprague's drawings. In 1897 Goodale tired of having his Botanic Garden income support the Gray Herbarium and asked that they be separated. The Corporation approved, and Goodale turned his attention to the development of the Botanical Museum closer to the University.

George Golding Kennedy — 1841-1918

(*Rhodora* 21: 25-38. 1919.)

A graduate of Harvard in 1864, with an M.D. in 1867, Kennedy had been a student of Asa Gray and was influenced by him. Although a successful practicing physician, Kennedy found time to travel and collect plants over the years with Fernald, Churchill, Collins and Williams. The early gatherings of the NEBC members were held at his home between the regular meetings. His group became known as the "Faxon Club" for which no records seem to be available. Kennedy's personal herbarium contained 14,390 sheets of flowering plants and a large collection of mosses.

He was known for his special knowledge of the flora of Willoughby, Vermont which was published in *Rhodora* (1904).

He served as a member of the Visiting Committee of the Gray Herbarium and in 1896 he generously supplied funds for the construction of the library wing.

Nathaniel Thayer Kidder — 1860-1938.

(*Who Was Who in America 1897-1942* p. 673. 1942.)

No obituary of Kidder appeared in *Rhodora*, even though he was the only member of the Club to serve two distinct terms as president, in 1896-9 and 1902-05, and the only president to serve for six years. A bachelor, he lived in Milton. His few botanical papers covered the flora of Milton and the Blue Hills, with another on the plants of the Isle au Haut. The Kidder wing of the Gray Herbarium was his gift in 1910 as a member of the Visiting Committee.

Edward Lothrop Rand — 1859-1924

(*Rhodora* 27: 17-27. 1925.)

Rand was graduated from Harvard College in 1881 and obtained a degree in law in 1884. He was successful in his profession. As a Harvard junior, he camped at Somes Sound on Mount Desert Island and was one of the youthful naturalists who formed the Champlain Society to prepare a natural history catalogue of the area. The first edition of his *Flora of Mount Desert Island* omitted the difficult grasses and sedges, but the fourth edition published in 1894 with J. H. Redfield, a friend of Asa Gray, was complete. A bronze plaque on a large boulder on the Jordan Pond trail on Mount Desert commemorates Rand's contributions to the knowledge of that flora.

Rand served as corresponding secretary of the NEBC from 1895 to 1921 and was the mainstay of the publications committee in soliciting funds and manuscripts for *Rhodora*. His personal herbarium, left to the NEBC in 1915, contained over 15,000 sheets.

Benjamin Lincoln Robinson — 1864-1935

(*Nat. Acad. Sci. Biographical Mem.* 17: 305-330, 1937.)

Although he was the editor of *Rhodora* for the first thirty volumes, president of the NEBC, the Curator and later Director of the Gray Herbarium, no obituary of Robinson ever appeared in *Rhodora*.

Robinson began his college career at Williams College, but after three months he was dissatisfied and entered Harvard, graduating with the class of 1887. With a young bride, he went to Strasburg, Germany where he received his Ph.D. degree in plant anatomy in 1889. Between 1891 and 1894, he taught scientific German at Harvard. On the death of Sereno Watson in 1892, Robinson was appointed Curator of the Gray Herbarium at the age of twenty-nine. When the Harvard Corporation approved Goodale's request that the Botanic Garden be separated from the financially insolvent Gray Herbarium in 1897, Robinson was forced reluctantly to raise money. Mrs. Asa Gray donated \$20,000 in 1899 to establish a professorship honoring her late husband, and Robinson was the first occupant of that chair. With the help of a "friends" organization having a basic membership fee of \$10 in 1897, Robinson was able in his career to increase the endowment of the Gray Herbarium from \$18,000 to \$526,000. Since the other Harvard botanists were located in the Agassiz Museum area, Robinson also requested permission from the University to move the work and the collections of the Gray Herbarium into "the city" to be adjacent to the cryptogamic collections and the Botanical Museum. Although President Eliot approved this proposal in 1900, the Friends of the Gray Herbarium and the members of its Visiting Committee were opposed and no funds were raised. By 1905 Robinson drew a pathetic description of the housing of Gray's collections. In his annual report he wrote that the building was partially fireproof, ill-lighted even in the daytime, poorly ventilated, with inadequate plumbing of an archaic and wholly unsatisfactory type, had no basement under much of the

building so that the lower cases were so damp as to cause molding of the specimens, the roof was ill-constructed that more than forty years of repair had never made it tight for more than a few weeks at a time, and so a wholly new structure was needed. In 1909 the University approved the idea of expanding and renovating the existing buildings if funds could be raised for the purpose. Robinson and Deane drew the plans. It is worth noting that over half of the members of the Visiting Committee at that time were members of the New England Botanic Club whose herbarium was then housed in these same quarters. They responded with gifts and supported additional fund raising. Kidder supplied the initial gift which built the addition known as the Kidder Wing. A message congratulating Kidder for this gift appears in the Club records. A member of the Harvard Corporation offered \$2,000 for Asa Gray's house which was unoccupied, and this was moved across Garden Street to its present location. The gavel used by subsequent presidents of the NEBC was turned from a corner post of this building. George Kennedy next gave \$25,000 for a library wing which developed the Gray Herbarium toward the Garden Street side. George White then donated \$21,500 for the construction of a new laboratory to replace the Hunnewell Laboratory in the opposite direction. In addition, \$10,000 was offered for equipment. Kennedy again donated funds, \$10,000 this time, to add a new facade to the old building. As the last construction, three members of the Visiting Committee supplied funds to rebuild the center part of the building into three galleries and a basement, completing the building as most of us knew it before 1940. Construction was finished and the building occupied in February of 1915. The minutes of the NEBC reveal that a meeting was held in the building, that the members were delighted with the new quarters for the Club herbarium, and that the entire structure was "brilliantly lighted throughout with electricity".

Robinson's research centered on the Eupatoriae of the Compositae, and he made a major contribution in a study of the flora of the Galápagos Islands. His editorship of *Rhodora* demonstrated that he was a perfectionist in his writing. He was also a versatile linguist with a knowledge of many languages. Dr. Lily M. Perry recalls his reviewing his use of Hungarian, anticipating visiting with Dr. C. Domin because he felt it would be nice to speak to Dr. Domin in his own language. He is remembered to this day as a kind and gentle man with a formal courtesy, a gentleman of Harvard.

Charles Sprague Sargent — 1841-1927

(*Jour. Arnold Arb.* 8: 69-86. 1927.)

Sargent is best remembered as the first Director of the Arnold Arboretum. He served in that capacity for fifty-four years and built up a remarkable institution soundly based on a library, an herbarium, and a living collection. Although a charter member of the NEBC, he never served in any official capacity. Several of the summer outings of the Club were under his auspices, all with the same itinerary: to Forest Hills by railroad, thence through the Arnold Arboretum and around his home in Brookline in carriages which he supplied.

Roland Thaxter — 1858-1932

(*Nat. Acad. Sci. Biographical Mem.* 17: 55-68. 1936.)

Thaxter was graduated from Harvard College in the class of 1882. His thesis had been on entomogenous fungi, and this proved to be his life work. He was appointed assistant professor of cryptogamic botany in 1891 and succeeded William G. Farlow as a professor in 1901. Thaxter served as president of the Club, was one of the frequent speakers for the monthly programs, and was one of the first to offer a botanical travel talk involving his work in the West Indies.

Benjamin Marston Watson — 1848-1918

(*Records of the Harvard class of 1870*, pp. 144-145.)

After his graduation from Harvard, Watson operated a nursery in Plymouth, Massachusetts, started by his father. In 1877 he was appointed an instructor in horticulture at the Bussey Institution where he taught arboriculture, fruiticulture and later landscape design. Although a charter member of the NEBC, he never held office and was never mentioned in the club minutes as a speaker or a participant.

Emile Francis Williams — 1858-1929

(*Rhodora* 33: 1-18. 1931.)

Williams spent his childhood in France and inherited a profitable import business from his father. His spare time was spent hiking in the White Mountains where, on one occasion, he met G. G. Kennedy collecting plants. When the NEBC was organized, Williams became the original secretary-treasurer, a role he continued to fill from 1896 until the Club was incorporated in 1922. He served on the editorial committee of *Rhodora* and was largely responsible for raising money to meet its annual deficit. In the early years the Club published annual booklets containing the Constitution and a list of the officers and members of the Club, which he edited. His obituary contained a detailed account of his gracious hospitality and the fine table he set at the dinners for members before the formal meetings of the Club. Throughout his life he was an active collector, especially on Mount Katahdin, joining all the club excursions and traveling with Fernald in Maine and Canada. His herbarium came to the NEBC in 1916.

No mention of the New England Botanical Club and its early history would be complete without comments on two individuals who made significant contributions to its development: Mary Anna Day and Merritt Lyndon Fernald.

Mary Anna Day — 1852-1924

(*Rhodora* 26: 41-47. 1924.)

The New England Botanical Club was a gentlemen's

organization, and Miss Day was not eligible for membership. She was a teacher and served as librarian in the Clinton, Massachusetts, public library. She sought a position at Harvard just as Miss Josephine Clark left the library of the Gray Herbarium for a position in Washington. Miss Day was appointed in 1893, and her first task was checking all the five thousand references in Gray and Watson's Synoptical Flora. When the New England Botanical Club was formed, Miss Day compiled lists of the existing local floras and of the known private and institutional herbaria of New England which were published in the original volume of *Rhodora*. For years after that she prepared the Index for the annual volumes of *Rhodora*. Although not a botanist, Miss Day was interested in plants and collected many of the early exsiccatae of the Gray Herbarium. In 1903 she took over the task of preparing the Gray Herbarium index cards and was responsible for the issuance of over 170,000 cards. Hers was also the task of organizing the library of the Gray Herbarium in the construction period of 1909 to 1915. She is mentioned occasionally in the minutes of the Club as an aid or consultant on the acquisitions for the Club library. A tribute to her life and contributions was published in *Rhodora*.

Merritt Lyndon Fernald — 1873-1950

(*Rhodora* 53: 33-65. 1951.)

Young Merritt Fernald came to the Gray Herbarium from his home in Maine in 1891 at the age of 18 and served as an assistant to Sereno Watson, curator of the Gray Herbarium until 1902. He was not a charter member of the New England Botanical Club but was among the first new members elected during the fourth meeting on March 4, 1896. Fernald immediately became active in the Club, working hard to establish the herbarium and contributing his observations regularly to the Club meetings, even guiding the amateurs in the proper preparation of specimens and in the identification of plants. At the tenth annual meeting of the Club, December 1, 1905, Emile Williams was asked to give "a little history of the Club, its

origin and development." This was printed separately and is a memento in the Club records. Of the herbarium Williams wrote, "The herbarium of the Club is one of its best institutions. Dr. Robinson can tell you how useful it has become. We owe a large debt of gratitude to Mr. Fernald for his labors in this direction, as well as in every other. How could we get along without Mr. Fernald? The devoted Mr. Fernald, always ready to stand in the breach, to supply an extra number for *Rhodora*, to deliver an address at one of our meetings."

Fernald was officially the "Phanerogamic Curator" from 1899 to 1911 and served then in succession as President (1911-1914), as Councillor (1914-1928), and as Editor of *Rhodora* from 1929 until his death in 1950. Short and paunchy, as I first knew him, Fernald remained bouncy and confident, a showman to the end. He livened the meetings of the New England Botanical Club through his contributions for over fifty-four years.

The Meetings

The goals of the original New England Botanical Club were many — to meet in a fraternity of gentlemen with a mutual interest in the plants of New England; to assemble an herbarium representing plant specimens from each county in the New England states; to prepare distribution lists of taxa to determine the ranges and the gaps of New England plants, and to publish a journal, *Rhodora*, for contributions on New England botany.

Initially the Club accepted nominations from its charter members for additional resident and non-resident members to be elected by written and secret ballot with a corps of "scrutineers" to count and report the ballots, a practice continued to this day. An induction fee was charged and dues were regularly assessed.

The fraternity of the meetings was obvious in good food, and often wines, served by a caterer following the formal meeting. At the June and October meetings all of the members were called upon, in order, to report on the

specimens of interest which they had found. Informal meetings for the insertion of specimens into the herbarium were well attended. Special conferences were conducted in the early years by Professor Fernald and others when groups of plants such as grasses, *Ranunculus*, sedges, ferns, aquatic plants were discussed in considerable detail, alerting the members to the characteristics and information to be sought in living specimens. Field trips were regularly scheduled to remote places needing concentrated collecting. Schedules of transportation, hotel reservations, etc., were issued in advance, and field work was well organized in assigned areas or details.

The NEBC continued its informal existence through two hundred twenty-seven meetings, until the tax laws of the Commonwealth became a concern and the club was officially incorporated in January of 1921. Since 1922 the secretary's minutes have begun as they do today, "The four hundred and seventy-third meeting of the New England Botanical Club being the seven hundredth since its establishment. . . .". Recording secretaries have been many, yet the quality of the reports through the years provides uniformly interesting reading of the activities of the Club; the election and comments of the members; the accounts of the principal speakers; the introduction of the first lantern slides or the first use of colored movies; the war-time trials and limitations such as cold meeting rooms to conserve coal or the substitution of cheese and crackers for luncheon plates in 1918; of deaths and touching tributes to members; of appeals for new members; or of the rising costs and budget deficits.

The Herbarium

The herbarium was begun with the original meeting and grew with regularity as members added specimens. Collections in private hands were sought out and acquired by the Club, and members usually bequeathed their own collections to the Club. A mounter was hired but club members inserted the specimens. Fernald once requested

paid help for the herbarium, but the suggestion was referred to the Council, which, according to the following records, never took any action. In 1926 the treasurer reported that the real cost of mounting and inserting a sheet in the herbarium was "well in excess of 5 cents" and therefore the investment in the herbarium was over \$7,000. Today the Club herbarium houses 243,189 specimens.

The Club herbarium was originally housed in the Agassiz Museum. There was a long debate on where the key should be kept, in Dr. Farlow's office or with the janitor, and this was finally settled by having it in Farlow's home. The herbarium was available to members on a regular basis, including weekly evening hours. In 1905 the herbarium was moved to the original Gray Herbarium on Garden Street and in 1915 to new quarters in the White wing of the renovated building. Finally in 1954 the herbarium was moved to its present quarters in the Harvard University Herbaria building, 22 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, where the monthly meetings are also held.

The survey of distribution of New England plants published periodically in the pages of *Rhodora* was begun by naming a family of plants with the request that the individual members check their private herbaria and bring the distribution records to a stated meeting. In later years the NEBC, by additions to its own herbarium, depended upon the faithful work of members to compile such listings. How well remembered is the work of Richard Eaton, Stuart Harris, Ralph Bean, Frank Seymour and Donald White to complete the lists published in the last decade!

Rhodora

The charter members of the NEBC considered carefully the formation of an official publication. By circulation of an invitation to subscribe, an original mailing list of six hundred was obtained. An editorial announcement in Volume 1, Number 1, January 1, 1899, stated, "Its publication has not been undertaken without mature considera-

tion, nor until through keen and helpful interest of New England botanists, a sufficient subscription list has been secured to assure its monetary support. The name *Rhodora*, although the designation of one of our most attractive New England plants, has been chosen, not from sentiment but primarily from a desire to have a distinctive and euphonious one-word title, experience having amply shown that similar titles (e.g., *Linnaea*, *Grevillea*, *Helios*, *Erythrea*, *Auk*, *Ibis*, etc.) soon become familiar, and possess great merit in their brevity and ease of citation." In fact, this decision and choice was reported amply in the records of the Club. B. L. Robinson was the spokesman for the one-word title, and a vote was taken on the choice of a name. Ballots were cast for *Rhodora*, *Oakesia*, *Watsonia*, *Bigelovia*, *Grayia* and *Nova Anglia*, in that order.

The original subscription to *Rhodora* was one dollar a year, with single copies priced at fifteen cents. Authors of more than one page were to receive twenty-five copies of the issues with reprints at cost. The early copies carried advertising. Members were invited to subscribe; the dues did not automatically include a subscription.

From the beginning *Rhodora* was a deficit operation. The initial subscription list dropped rapidly at the time of renewal, for many expressed the opinion that the journal was too technical. When the treasurer reported that the cost of *Rhodora* was four times the receipts from subscriptions, an appeal was made, at first annually and later triennially, for special gifts to subsidize the publication without the annual draft against the general funds of the Club. For a period manuscripts were rejected due to excessive maps or plates. As late as 1933 M.L. Fernald reported to the club, "Technical scientific journals do not pay their way. Intended for the permanent record of newly discovered truth, they must be issued at a price within reach of any who need access to them. Temporarily we are most fortunate in our support; but we must look to the future. The bequests already made by members of the Club who while with us took a keen interest in *Rhodora*

are comfortable nest eggs which greatly relieve the worries of the Treasurer and of the Editorial Board. Provisions in our wills for their multiplication will insure the future of *Rhodora*; but, since botanists as a group are long-lived, it is suggested that earlier additions to the permanent endowment of *Rhodora* may bring prompter and greater returns in satisfaction to the investors." Eventually several endowed funds for the support of *Rhodora* were received by the Club. *Rhodora* was edited by B. L. Robinson for Volumes 1-30, M. L. Fernald for Volumes 31-52, R. C. Rollins for Volumes 53-63 and A. R. Hodgdon for Volumes 64-75. The Club has been fortunate in having this small, dedicated group of voluntary and unpaid editors.

The Archives

The Club has a long history partly preserved in the minutes of the meetings and partly as archival material. Various people over the years contributed newspaper clippings, photographs, cartoons, poetry, letters or miscellaneous mementos. Recently the current Club librarian, M. Canoso, has attempted to organize the material on hand. A series of undated photographs of members appear to be associated with an appeal made by Mr. Bullard, as recorded in the minutes of October 4, 1934 for "all members who had not yet had their photographs taken for the club records to send to him a suitable likeness so as to complete this branch of the Historical Committee's work." Kodachrome slides made of these early photographs accompanied this presentation on the occasion of the seven hundredth meeting.

One of the oldest of the "poems" long associated with the New England Botanical Club was attributed to Edward L. Rand in 1900 and is available in a much duplicated form. Although it has been read on occasions, the original was considered lost with the older records. Now it can be dated in the minutes, having been read first on March 2, 1900. "Verses by Edward L. Rand inspired by the following statement of Mr. Fernald in *Rhodora* 11-39. 'Mr.

Walter Deane informs me that in his youth he was familiar with Old Orchard Beach and that at that time this *Artemisia* (*A. stelleriana*) was not seen’.”

Me Judice

In the youth of Walter Deane, in those glorious ancient days,

Foreign plants had not crept in with insinuating ways.
Every plant was then our own, from each rootlet tip so small

And the old world floral tramps did not cut a dash at all; —

All our plants were indigene

In the youth of Walter Deane.

In the youth of Walter Deane, gardens were not hard to weed;

Our plants were too polite to promiscuously seed,

And profanity produce. Foreign weeds grew only then

In ash barrels far remote, — rarities were they to men.

Shepherd’s-purse grew not, I ween,

In the youth of Walter Deane.

Little Walter on the wharves used to sit from day to day,
Waiting for the ships to bring plants from lands so far away,

Dandelions, buttercups, white weed, chickweed, — all were new, —

With a thousand other things, well known plants to me and you.

These, remember, were first seen

Since the youth of Walter Deane.

Long ago these days have fled. Walter to a man has grown
All the floras of the world now contribute to our own.

Yet confusion can’t arise, all new comers one by one

Have been noted by our friend since their inroad first begun;

So we know what’s indigene

From the words of Walter Deane.

The twentieth anniversary meeting of the Club was re-

ported in the minutes of February 4, 1916. "Mr. Edward L. Rand, the recognized bard of the Club, an office not in the Club book but which so far no one has ventured to compete for against him, read the following verses which he too modestly calls a skit."

As I was walking through a field
The habitat was wet
I chanced to see a winsome thing
The modest Violet.

She looked familiar. Once I knew
Her given name — I think
But now we know these plants seem named
By influence of drink.

Her color was what poets call
"A bit of Heaven's own blue"
But this is very, very wrong
As Mathews shows to you.

"Dear Flower," I said, "I love you well.
Yourself pray introduce."
She bowed her head and murmured low,
"It would not be much use.

"A man who lives up in Vermont
'Freakish' calls me and 'cross'
And says no one respectable
Can guess what is my source.

"A nameless nothing sure am I.
Forget your love for me
Until I find out who I am
In plant society."

I could not comfort her, alas,
For specialistic ways
Must hurt the feelings of the plants
In these intensive days.

I had to leave her to her grief,
 For versed not am I
 In dead names that are brought to life
 And living names that die.

No comfort lies in synonyms, —
 But how nice it would be
 If she could have the novum nom
 of *V. brainerdii*.

This poem ribbing the very active members of the Club, Vermont specialist on *Viola*, Ezra Brainerd, and F. Schuyler Mathews, of "Wild Flower" fame was followed by a song "which will doubtless become a classic at celebrations of the New England Botanical Club." It is entitled "Segregation Song", and needless to say it is the work of Edward L. Rand. This was sung by the whole club under the leadership of Harold St. John. Sung to the tune of "My Bonnie", the first of six verses is:

The deuce of a genus is *Aster*, intermediates come by the score
 "Destroy them at once", says the wise man, else there will be species galore.

Chorus

Segre —, Segre —, Segregation is a terrible bore
 Bring back, bring back, oh, bring back our species of yore.

At this same meeting Mr. Rand also made the following announcement in verse:

If anyone knows a man who would enjoy the Club
 And whom the members might enjoy, whose home is near
 the Hub,
 Throw off this girlish bashfulness, and send his name to
 me.

I'll take it to the Council, so he may elected be
 (We really need a lot of names, for it would be a winner
 If we could make new members pay the bill for this great
 dinner.)

The twentieth meeting concluded with another song with words by Rand and sung to the tune of John Brown's Body. The verses were a parody on the many talks given by M. L. Fernald, and two of them are worthy of quotation.

In old times the Bryan Vikings voyaged far across the
foam

Just to find the genial grapejuice, as is stated in the poem.
How that juice must have fermented — do you think they
brought it home?

Rhodora tells it all.

Chorus

Glory, glory to New England
Glory, glory to New England
Glory, glory to New England
and our N.E.B.C.

Now for all these great achievements which our Club may
justly claim

We must give great praise and credit, else we should be
much to blame,

To that man who led us onward, M. L. Fernald is his name.
Rhodora tells it all.

Although a "bard" has not appeared in the Club in recent years, there is an anonymous short poem often quoted at the Club even in his time, to the delight of its victim the Latin scholar and ex-college president, Arthur Stanley Pease. George R. Cooley recorded this in a letter to Richard Eaton in 1959.

Here lies the body of Stanley Pease
Buried beneath the venerable trees
What lies here is only the pod
Pease shelled out and went to God.

Although the New England Botanical Club was originally a gentlemen's organization, there is a reference in the minutes of the meeting of May 7, 1915, to "our one lady member." Who this female member might be cannot be

determined by a check of the club books of the year. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Club in 1946 greetings were received from the California Botanical Society which prompted the following poetic response from E. J. Palmer.

We thank you for the good intent
Of the kind sentiments you sent
When this distinguished club of Men
Had reached the age of two-score-ten.

Back in the days when men were men
And botanists were gentlemen,
They loved their wives and sisters too —
As we do still, as well as you.

But there were times — the saints be thanked
Our fathers felt were sacrosanct,
And spots to which they might retreat
That were forbid to female feet;

Where they might gather and regale
On wisdom spiced with salty tale,
Secure and sure *they* wore the pants
And not the wives and spinster aunts.

We, sons of sires of those brave days,
Still follow in their prudent ways;
And so as was the founders' plan,
There are no sisters in our clan.

So pardon us, if we should quote
One slight faux pas in your kind note,
When you address — by slip of pen —
As a "sister club", this club of Men.

1973

However, times have changed, and in 1968, after much agonizing debate, the New England Botanical Club amended its by-laws to admit women. With good taste, recent presidents have not asked the lady members to serve on the

refreshment committee or to pour tea. In fact, one of them is now the recording secretary and another the phanerogamic curator. Meetings in 1973 close not with dinners, or the tub of ice cream so popular with the student members when I joined the club, but with beer of many varieties and ginger ale for those who so choose, accompanied by doughnuts and cheese and crackers. *Rhodora* is now a quarterly containing a larger number of extra-territorial papers. Council meetings precede the regular meetings since many of the officers travel distances to attend which would be beyond the comprehension of the founders of 1895. The herbarium still needs volunteers to insert specimens or to check distribution records. The June and October meetings have been termed "show and tell" sessions but are still enjoyed by those attending. Above all, good fellowship prevails and a mutual interest in the flora of New England forecasts a long life for the New England Botanical Club.

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